

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- **EAP Services for
Employees Page 2**
- **EAP as a Resource for
Supervisors Page 4**
- **Additional Information Page 5**

**Occupational Medical Services Team
September 2000**

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Important Information

This booklet provides general guidance for employees, supervisors, and managers about the County's Employee Assistance Program. This booklet is not intended to change or otherwise modify any law, regulation, procedure, or collective bargaining agreement that may govern the subject matter covered in this document. If there is an inconsistency, the law, regulation, procedure, or collective bargaining agreement will prevail. Please also bear in mind that laws, regulations, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements may be amended at any time.

EAP Services for Employees

Q. What is the EAP?

A. The EAP is a confidential, short-term, professional counseling service offered to County employees by an independent contractor to the County. The program is currently administered by the Sheppard Pratt Health Plan, under contract to the Office of Human Resources (OHR).

Q. What kind of counseling is offered by the program?

A. The EAP provides confidential assistance to you and your family members who may be experiencing personal problems. The kinds of problems for which the EAP offers assistance are:

- Marital or family problems;
- Emotional distress (depression, stress, etc.);
- Alcoholism or alcohol misuse;
- Drug abuse (prescription or illegal drugs);
- Problems caused by another's alcohol or drug abuse;
- Other personal difficulties, including those resulting from financial, legal, or health problems; and
- Work place issues.

Q. The EAP offers “short-term” counseling. What does that mean?

A. Up to six counseling sessions per problem per year are available to you or a family member. Many personal problems can be effectively treated in that time. However, if specialized or on-going counseling is determined to be necessary, you'll be referred to your health plan's professional counselors. Every attempt is made to recommend professionals who best meet your personal and budget needs.

Q. Who are the EAP counselors?

A. The counselors are trained, skilled, licensed mental health professionals employed by Sheppard Pratt. They are not County employees.

Q. Who may use the EAP?

A. All Montgomery County employees, fire corporation employees, Montgomery County volunteer firefighters, and their spouses and dependents are eligible to use the program. Assistance is also available to supervisors who wish to discuss problems encountered in managing the work unit.

Q. What is the cost for EAP services?

A. There's no cost to employees or supervisors for services offered by the EAP.

Q. What about confidentiality?

A. Contacts with the EAP are held in strict confidence. The EAP carefully follows federal laws and regulations which require specific written consent to release information. EAP records do not become part of your personnel file. Your supervisor may not obtain information about your consultations with EAP without your written permission.

Q. Can I have administrative leave to use the EAP during work hours?

A. Your supervisor can authorize up to two hours of administrative leave for your initial counseling visit. Your department head may authorize additional administrative leave, if justified, or you may request to use sick or annual leave for EAP appointments.

Q. Will my supervisor know that I'm using EAP services?

A. If you initiate counseling with the EAP, your supervisor will only know if you choose to tell him or her. However, if you request administrative leave, you'll need to explain the reason for your

request. If you request to use sick leave "for a medical appointment" or annual leave, your supervisor will not know that you're using EAP services. Your supervisor will not be contacted by EAP, and your EAP records will not become part of your County files.

Q. Can I be referred to the EAP by another person?

A. If your supervisor observes work performance problems, he or she may refer you to the EAP for confidential assistance. This referral may be made without clearance from OHR's Occupational Medical Services Team (OMS). If you're referred by your supervisor to OMS for a fitness-for-duty examination, EAP services may be a required part of that examination.

Q. Where are the counseling centers located?

A. There are several convenient and private locations in the County. Locations are convenient to most work sites, and evening hours are available. When you call to make an appointment, you may select the location most convenient for you. Facilities are wheelchair accessible. Individuals needing special assistance may call 202-429-1950 or The Relay Service at 202-855-1000 (voice) or 202-855-1234 (TTY).

Q. How do I make an appointment?

A. It's as easy as a phone call to make an appointment. Phone numbers are 202-429-1950 or 1-800-853-8072. Call weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. If you have an *urgent need* to talk to a counselor after weekday hours, call 1-800-627-0330 and ask for the on-call counselor.

EAP as a Resource for Supervisors

Q. How can the EAP help supervisors?

A. The EAP offers:

- An understanding and professional hearing of problems you may be having with an employee you supervise.
- Assistance in working out your concerns and feelings about a troubled employee in a productive way.
- Guidance in documenting and managing performance and behavior problems.
- Guidance and support in talking with your employee about job performance and behavior problems, when this is necessary.

- Competent and professional assessment and referral, as needed, of employees you send for help.
- Follow-up with treatment resources for your employees as necessary, to determine whether they are receiving the services promised and whether they are following the prescribed treatment programs.
- Follow-up with you, the supervisor, *to the extent permitted by confidentiality regulations*. The EAP cannot discuss an employee's condition or treatment with you unless you have the employee's written permission.
- Continued assistance, as necessary to your employee and to you in readjusting to a productive work relationship.

Q. What about confidentiality?

A. Your consultations with EAP will not be passed on to your employee, your supervisor, or anyone else without your approval.

Q. How does a supervisor or manager request EAP assistance?

A. Call 202-429-1950 or 1-800-853-8072 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Often, assistance can be provided by phone. Otherwise, an individual appointment will be scheduled.

Additional Information

Q. Where can I get more information about the program?

A. You can contact the OMS Team at 240-777-5118.

Note: This information can be made available in an alternate format, if necessary. Contact the Occupational Medical Services Team at 240-777-5118.